

Message Text

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FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7283

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION SEPTEMBER 4

REF: BEIRUT 7272

1. SUMMARY: TWO LEBANESE REPRESENTATIVES IN CAIRO FOR
ARAB LEAGUE FONMIN MEETING. NUMBER OF MAJOR LEBANESE
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RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LEADERS PLAN DISCUSSIONS IN

DAMASCUS. HOUGHTON AND MACK MEET SARKIS, CHAMOUN AND GEMAYEL. "NATIONAL ISLAMIC FRONT" FORMED WITH LAA'S LT. AHMED KHATIB AS MEMBER. CHAMOUN SAYS HE WILLING TEMPORARILY TO REJECT MILITARY SOLUTION. FORMER PRESIDENT CHARLES HELOU ADVOCATES CANTONIZATION. GROUND SITUATION STATIC WITH ARTILLERY DUELS IN MANY AREAS AND UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF VIOLENT CLASHES FROM THE MOUNTAINS. END SUMMARY.

2. ARAB LEAGUE. AL FONMINS TO MEET IN CAIRO AMID SPECULATION HERE ON WHETHER DELEGATES WILL BE ABLE SET DATE FOR ARAB SUMMIT AND WHETHER EVEN ARAB SUMMIT CAN SAVE LEBANON. DELEGATES FOR LEBANON SENT BY BOTH KARAME AND CHAMOUN. CHAMOUNIST DELEGATE NAGIB DAHDAH ACCOMPANIED BY KHALIL HADDAD AND EDUARD KHOURY. HE SAYS HE WILL PRESENT FRANGIE POSITION: 1) APPLICATION OF PALESTINIAN/LEBANESE ACCORDS; 2) REQUEST THAT FRIENDLY COUNTRIES HELP REBUILD LEBANON; 3) POLITICAL TRUCE TO PERMIT SARKIS REGIME TO BEGIN IN NORMAL CLIMATE; AND 4) A HALT TO FIGHTING. L'ORIENT SPECULATES THAT, SHOULD FONMIN MEETING FAIL, MINI-SUMMIT WOULD STILL BE POSSIBLE.

3. PILGRIMAGE TO SYRIA. WITH NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS OF JUNBLATT AND EDDE, MAJOR POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS LINING UP FOR PRESARKIS TAKEOVER TRIPS TO DAMASCUS. TALKS ARE MAINLY AT SYRIAN INVITATION AND HAVE ALREADY INCLUDED SHIITE LEADER MOUSA SADR AND SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE KAMEL EL-ASSAD. PIERRE GEMAYEL EXPECTED IN DAMASCUS SEPT 6 AT HEAD OF PHALANGE DELEGATION AND CHAMOUN SEP 8. SAEB SALAM, RASHID KARAME, ADEL OSSEIRAN, THE GRAND MUFTI, DRUZE SHEIKH AKL AND REPRESENTATIVE OF ISLAMIC ASSOCIATION ALSO EXPECTED. A LATE SEPTEMBER MEETING BETWEEN ASSAD, KING HUSSEIN AND SARKIS MAY ALSO BE HELD IN DAMASCUS.

4. US AND SOVIET DIPLOMACY. AMERICAN ENVOYS ROBERT HOUGHTON AND DAVID MACK MET SEPARATELY SEPTEMBER 3 WITH SARKIS, CHAMOUN AND GEMAYEL. IN SEPARATE ENCOUNTER WITH PRESS, CHAMOUN PROFESSED NOT TO KNOW IF REPORTED RECALL OF SOVIET AMB-CONFIDENTIAL

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ASSADOR DUE TO SOVIET DISPLEASURE, BUT ATTACKED SOVIET UNION SEPTEMBER 3 FOR "VIOLATING ALL DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL PRACTICES." STATEMENT FOLLOWS PRAVDA AFFIRMATION OF SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIANS AND NATIONAL MOVEMENT.

5. NATIONAL ISLAMIC FRONT. NEW GROUP CALLED "NATIONAL ISLAMIC FRONT" ANNOUNCED SEPTEMBER 3. FRONT UNITES

SHEIHK SOBHI SALEH, SHEIKH ABDEL-HAMID HERR AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LEBANESE ARAB ARMY, INCLUDING LAA LEADER LT. AHMED KHATIB. COMMUNIQUE DESCRIBES GROUP AS OF NEITHER RIGHT NOR LEFT, FORMED TO COUNTER PLOT TO DIVIDE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY, PLEDGES GROUP "TO FACILITATE THE MISSION OF PRESIDENT SARKIS" AND DECLARES OPPOSITION TO ALL FOREIGN MILITARY INTERVENTION. KHATIB'S ASSOCIATION WITH GROUP MAY REFLECT LONG HELD DESIRE OF PALESTINIAN AND NATIONAL MOVEMENT LEADERSHIP TO MOVE TROUBLESOME LIEUTENANT ONTO A POLITICAL PLANE AND OUT OF MILITARY SPHERE.

6. RIGHTIST VIEWS. CHAMOUN ISSUES STATEMENT HE IS OPTIMISTIC ON POSSIBILITY OF POLITICAL SOLUTION "AND THAT IS WHY WE REFUSE, FOR THE MOMENT AND VERY PROVISIONALLY, A MILITARY SOLUTION." HOWEVER, HE ADDS, "MILITARY SOLUTION IS IN OUR HANDS," AND WARNS SEPTEMBER 23 NOT A MIRACLE DATE. CHAMOUN REITERATES NLP NOT FULLY IN ACCORD WITH AL PEACE PLAN BECAUSE WORKABLE PLAN "MUST PRESERVE POLITICAL POSITIONS OF THE LEBANESE." INTERVIEWED ON VOICE OF LEBANON (KATAEB), FORMER PRESIDENT CHARLES HELOU SAYS, "PALESTINIANS SHOULD UNDERSTAND THEIR INSURRECTION HAS MISCARRIED." HELOU SAYS HE SUPPORTS CANTONIZATION AS STEP TOWARD REUNIFICATION AND CALLS FOR POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS UNDER SARKIS LEADERSHIP.

7. GROUND SITUATION. IN THE NORTH. HEAVY ARTILLERY DUELS IN TRIPOLI AREA. SEPTEMBER 3 SAW SMALL SCALE OFFENSIVE BY CHRISTIANS SOUTH OF CITY. WE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE EVIDENCE THAT NATIONALIST GROUPS IN TRIPOLI, MOST NOTABLY THE 24 OCTOBER GROUP OF FAROUK MUQADDAM, ARE TACITLY ALIGNING WITH SYRIANS.
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SUBSEQUENT DEFECTIONS MAY MAKE FUTURE MILITARY ACTION EASIER. TRIPOLITANIANS VERY APPREHENSIVE SYRIANS WILL ATTACK CITY.

8. IN THE CENTER. PRESS REPORTS OVER 400 ARTILLERY AND MORTAR ROUNDS IN AREA FROM ALEY TO KAHLE, CAUSING HEAVY MATERIAL DAMAGE AND WOODS FIRES. CLASHES REPORTED FROM HIGH METN. TANKS SAID USED IN CHRISTIAN ASSAULTS NEAR SANNINE, BUT THIS DOUBTFUL UNLESS USED ONLY AS ARTILLERY. WE UNDERSTAND TWO SYRIAN MINE EXPLoding TANKS HAVE ARRIVED AT SOFAR. MAIN ROADS FROM WESTERN PERIPHERY OF SYRIAN CONTROL AT SOFAR HAVE BEEN MINED BY PALESTINIAN/LEFTISTS.

9. BEIRUT AND SHOUTH. CLASHES CONTINUE IN BEIRUT PORT

AREA AND ALONG CENTER CITY GREEN LINE, WHERE PALESTINIANS/
LEFTISTS CLAIM TWELVE SUCCESSFUL RAIDS. SPORADIC
ARTILLERY FIRE ON SOME RESIDENTIAL AREAS BOTH EAST
AND WEST. CHYIAH/AIN EL-RUMMANEH BOMBARDMENTS
CONTINUE. SHELLS FALLING AS WELL AT FURN EL-CHEBBAK,
BAABDA, YARZI, HADETH, KFARCHIMA, CHOUEIFAT AND
SURROUNDING AREAS. IN THE SOUTH, SYRIANS AT YEZZINE
CONTINUE TO SHELL PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST POSITIONS AT
ROUN AND ANANE. L'ORIENT QUOTES RIGHTIST SOURCE
CLAIMING WSRAELI TROOP CONCENTRATIONS AT SOUTHERN
BORDER. LEBANESE ARMY G-2 SOURCES NOW SAY THEY HAVE
INDICATIONS OF SOME NEW SYRIAN TROOPS AND EQUIPMENT
IN BEKAA, BUT SPECULATE THEY MAY BE REPLACEMENTS.
SAME SOURCES ALSO HAVE INFO THAT PALESTINIANS/
LEFTISTS NOT OVERLY CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE SYRIAN
OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AT THIS TIME, DUE TO INTERNAL
POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS IN SYRIA.
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